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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9875
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS CAIRO 001527

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR NEA/ELA AND DRL/IL, NSC FOR PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: CLOSED LABOR NGO RE-OPENS

REF: 2007 CAIRO 1283

¶1. (SBU) After a year-long legal battle, the Center for Trade Union and Workers Services (CTUWS), a labor rights group, has re-opened. The group's offices were closed by State Security officers in April 2007, after the Ministry of Social Solidarity accused the organization of inciting nationwide labor unrest and of failing to register as a non-governmental association (reftel). At the time, CTUWS was registered as a "civil company," as its previous attempts to register as an NGO had been unsuccessful. Labor activists told us they believed CTUWS was closed down as punishment for its role in advising striking workers of their legal rights and previous GOE promises regarding pay and bonuses, and for its efforts to expose widespread irregularities in the 2006 labor union elections. The Minister of Manpower Aisha Abdel Hady and the head of the government-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation both stated publicly at the time that CTUWS was responsible for inciting labor unrest (reftel). Subsequent to the closure of CTUWS offices, the group's general coordinator, Kamal Abbas, was sentenced to one year in prison after being found liable in a libel lawsuit. The jail sentence was suspended while Abbas fought it, and the decision against him was ultimately annulled in February 2008.

¶2. (SBU) On March 30, the Cairo Administrative Court ruled that there was no reason that CTUWS should not be registered as an NGO. In accordance with the court's decision, on June 25, the Ministry of Social Solidarity registered CTUWS as a "non-governmental services association." On July 12, CTUWS held a re-opening party at its Cairo headquarters (it also plans to re-open offices in other cities, including the Nile Delta mill-town of Mahalla al Kubra, which has witnessed repeated strikes and unrest over the past year). The event was attended by Minister of Manpower Aisha Abdel Hady and Minister of Social Solidarity Aly Moselhi. According to attendees, in response to questions, Abdel Hady commented that the problems CTUWS had faced were the fault of the Ministry of Social Solidarity, to which Moselhi replied that he was "only applying Egyptian law," and that, "the influence of the security services on such decisions cannot be ignored the security services present reports that we must act on."

¶3. (SBU) Comment: It is not clear whether the end to CTUWS' legal woes was a calculated decision by the GOE indicating lessened concern about workers strikes (which, after a slowdown in April and May, appear to be picking up again), or simply was a victory engineered by independent judges. Either way, CTUWS is now working legally as an NGO.
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